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FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8566
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002366

NOFORN
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/28/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: FM ZEBARI FRUSTRATED WITH PM MALIKI AND WONDERS
ABOUT RELATIONS WITH JORDAN

REF: A. REF A (STATE 78542)
[1](#)B. REF B (BAGHDAD 2203)
[1](#)C. REF C (BAGHDAD 1929)

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Robert Ford. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: Iraqi Foreign Minister Zebari was his usual gregarious self but also made no effort to hide frustrations stemming from his relationship with PM Maliki and his continued disappointment that King Abdullah had not yet rescheduled his visit to Baghdad (originally planned for July 9). Recently arrived PolMinCouns called on Zebari July 27 to convey ref A points on renewing UNAMI's mandate (reported septel) and to discuss with Zebari efforts to promote Iraq's regional engagement. Zebari noted how European countries had stressed the importance of the Iraqi Christian issue during PM Maliki's just completed visits to Germany and Italy. Zebari displayed a distinct lack of enthusiasm regarding his own upcoming visit to Tehran for the July 29-30 NAM Ministerial -- a visit he said he would make as short as possible. End Summary.

Frustrations with PM Maliki

[1](#)2. (S/NF) FM Zebari made no attempt to hide his growing frustration with PM Maliki's slow-rolling of appointments for Ambassadors to key Arab countries. Zebari reported no progress gaining PM Maliki's approval of the names of six career ambassadors since the last time Ambassador Crocker raised the issue with him on July 11 (ref B). Although Zebari said he has raised this with Maliki many times since early June (as have we), the PM has not responded definitively on these specific cases nor has submitted the larger group of 40 ambassadorial candidates to the CoR for Parliamentary approval. With the CoR scheduled to conclude its current session this week and then begin a month-long summer holiday, Zebari appeared resigned that progress could not be expected on this front until the autumn.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) In a similar vein, Zebari made a point of underlining the importance of the Embassy dealing only with the MFA on the issue of assigning U.S.-held IZ properties to future occupants. (Note: As reported ref C, the Embassy and MNF-I have been working with the MFA to facilitate preparation of several IZ villas for use as future embassies of key Arab neighbors and other priority countries. The PM's office has complicated this effort by requesting some of the properties be set aside for other uses. We have made clear that the GOI should speak with one voice and that we desire to work through the MFA on this issue. End Note).

King Abdullah and other High Level Visits -- Nothing Expected Soon

14. (S/NF) In a brief discussion on the subject, FM Zebari made clear his lingering disappointment with the July 9 non-visit of Jordan's King Abdullah. He downplayed the security concerns that prompted the Jordanian postponement, noting that the following day, July 10, Turkish PM Erdogan had visited Baghdad and received full state honors without incident. With the King's postponement, he said, Jordan had lost a timely opportunity to strengthen relations -- coming not long after PM Maliki's June 12 visit to Amman. Zebari expressed some dismay that the GOJ continues to distance itself from Iraq and appears to view the Jordanian-Saudi relationship as more important than the Jordanian-Iraqi one. Even during difficult periods of Saddam's time, he observed, Jordanian-Iraqi relations had always remained strong. While acknowledging that the GOI could do more to improve bilateral relations, particularly with regard to the large population of Iraqi refugees in Jordan (something he viewed as doubtful since PM Maliki "thinks they're all Baathists"), he again speculated, as he had previously (Ref B), that the Saudis were somehow involved in scuttling the King's visit and that the security concerns identified by Amman for the postponement served as a pretext for other motives.

15. (S/NF) Looking ahead, Zebari said he still hopes the King's visit will be rescheduled. However, the imminent departure of President Talabani to the U.S. for medical treatment will almost certainly preclude any high level visits -- King Abdullah's or others -- until Talabani returns to the country following recuperation. Zebari underlined that protocol sensitivities at the Presidency Council make such high-level visits tricky. As such, he deemed it doubtful that we would see such visits in the coming weeks.

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Iraqi Christians -- An Issue that Comes Up Over and Over Again

16. (C) Turning briefly to PM Maliki's just-completed trips to Germany and Iraq (in which he took part), Zebari's most pointed observation was on the need for the GOI to take more seriously the issue of Iraqi Christians. This is "something that comes up over and over again." He said the topic was raised Berlin and Rome, and with the Pope. In his meeting with the Pope, Zebari said PM Maliki delivered two messages: (1) do what you can to discourage Christians from departing Iraq and (2) let's work together to jointly organize a meeting, either inside Iraq or outside, to address the issue.

Visit to Tehran -- As Short as Possible

17. (S/NF) Finally, as the meeting concluded, FM Zebari made clear that he was not looking forward to his July 29-30 visit to Tehran to participate in the NAM Ministerial. While acknowledging that the NAM would provide a forum for him to meet with many key international players, the thought of visiting Tehran was plainly something Zebari viewed with the excitement of a visit to the dentist. Joking that the MFA was "the one citadel where the Iranians don't have influence," he said he planned to make his visit as short as possible.

Comment

18. (C) Always the affable interlocutor, Zebari's smile and easy manner could not mask his frustration with PM Maliki's continued delay in taking action on ambassadorial appointments. Coupled with his quip that the MFA is the last GOI bastion free of Iranian influence, and that King

Abdullah's visit remains in limbo, he gives the sense of a man whose patience is being tested as his careful efforts to promote Iraq's regional engagement are running into obstacles, large and small.

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